

# THE PEACOCK LETTER



THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

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## THE INTEGRAL KNOWLEDGE STUDY CENTER

The Integral Knowledge Study Center was formed in 1979, when a visit from India by M. P. Pandit and Vasanti Rao brought together a number of seekers into a collective endeavour of study, meditation, and inner growth. The overarching goal of the Center, in harmony with the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, has since been to aid in the discovery of the secret soul of delight that dwells within each person, and to promote the integral perfection of life that can flow from this discovery of authentic being.

A number of activities are sponsored that support this spiritual search, but the core of the Center's collective life is a weekly study group that meets on Sunday evenings. Appropriate books drawn from the extensive literature of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother serve as the focus of these meetings, where probing, positive discussions among the participants enhance clarity and lead into a concluding group meditation.

Among other public offerings are seminars and workshops covering a wide variety of themes relating to spiritual life, the viewing of significant films dealing with the growth of consciousness, and the occasional sponsorship of guest speakers. Private counselling and instruction in meditation are also available for individuals through the Center without charge.

On August 15, 1983, Sri Aurobindo's Relics were inaugurated at the Center. It marked the first time that the Relics left India for another country. For many seekers in America the Relics offer profound significance and continuing inspiration.

## THE PEACOCK LETTER

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## FOR THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

Rand Hicks

Sri Aurobindo published the first issue of the *Arya* one hundred years ago today on his birthday. Its opening essay was “The Life Divine.” A note in his private diary in late June reads: “The first chapter of the Life Divine completed with great illumination in the thought & rapidity in its expression.” Yes, and they are words that redeem the world and celebrate the potential of life. Humanity can live divinely through conscious evolution, and the method of this attainment will be an integral yoga which liberates and refreshes self and then society. Live from the soul, embrace the world-existence, found all action upon the harmonizing Transcendent. Sri Aurobindo’s philosophical review represented the intellectual side of his work for the world.

Great spiritual realizations, broad and inclusive, supported this work. His realization of the passive Brahman came in 1908 in Baroda, absorbing him into an unthinkable impersonal That. Inwardly stilled, he continued his political revolutionary work. It led him to prison months later, but it became a trysting ground for the Divine. There in the Alipore Jail came the realization of the cosmic consciousness — a universal Person who manifested and occupied the worlds, yet is seated at the heart of all beings, directing its revolutions and evolutions. One realization did not erase the other; they fused and became the basis of a farther dynamic program, an integral yoga, in which the Vedantic realization would serve as the foundation of the tantric synthesis.

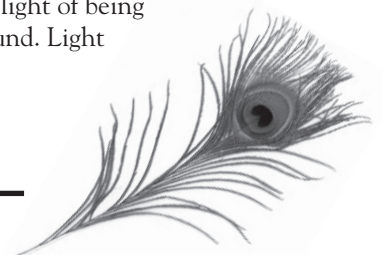
The whole of India’s spirit features in his vision, though ultimately he outpaces all confining distinctions and erases territorial boundaries. Sri Aurobindo’s penetrating light reveals how the Rigveda’s ascent of the sacrifice is transformative to the individual’s aspiration, lifting the consciously-given sacrificant to higher regions, then installing those enlarging divine powers into the giver’s life so far as he can accept them. The Upanishads discover and confirm that wondrous being of conscious bliss. And the Bhagavad Gita eventually unveils the Supreme Person, the Purushottama, the source of a supernature’s creative action and

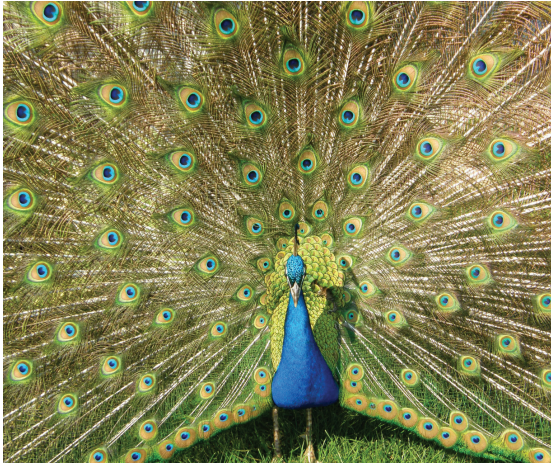


Krishna and Crane Chandravimba Ragaputra Rajasthan, c.1760

who is the hidden spark inside each. All these insights from the Indian traditions advance life; they do not deny it. The tantra again reveals in its own language and characteristic methods that the Divine Consciousness is here, and when we live in communion with its spiritual power, then our lives are beatific and full of light as well as joy.

Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual life did not separate him from the world. He refused *sannyāsa*. There was nothing of the *śramana* in him, nothing of the renunciant who denies value and significance to life. His own instinct to fulfill life and its inner delight was encouraged by the Isha Upanishad and enjoined upon all practitioners of the tantra. Vedantic affirmations were indeed the foundation of his practice, but the synthetic aim of the tantra was its companion. Liberated from ego-imprisonment and the unsatisfiable rounds of desire, one can indeed taste and enjoy the intrinsic delight of being in this body, in this life, and in all around. Light and delight dance in a body of bliss.





## PEACOCK'S FAN

To prepare for a lengthy study of *The Life Divine*, the Center's Sunday evenings from March to July were invested in a sampling of the Indian spirit across the ages. We spent more than a month in the Veda and Upanishads, three evenings in the Bhagavad Gita, several in Jainism, Buddhism, the Yoga Sutras, and the principal schools of Vedanta. Then we concentrated on the Mahadevi tradition, several spheres of the lengthy tantric tradition, and the bhakti path as epitomized by Chaitanya. Leading to this Fifteenth of August, we took in the major events in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual life up to the launching of the journal ARYA in August 1914. "The Life Divine" was its first article.

We are joined on Sunday evenings by out-of-town friends through a conferencing app. We've had aspirants tune in from Texas, Colorado, Michigan, D.C., Washington state, and Florida.

Jan Kleinman, our dear friend and ally and fellow aspirant, left her body on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. She was with us when we founded the Center, and her guiding grace and benevolent beauty impressed everyone who ever met her.

Karen Litfin's book — *Ecovillages: Lessons for Sustainable Community* — continues to draw enthusiastic comment and interest. It's available through Polity Press, and includes insightful depictions of community life in Auroville, Damanhur, Earthaven, Findhorn, Sarvodaya, and others whom we should meet in person and print.

## THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

### Sri Aurobindo

*She follows to the goal of those that are passing on beyond, she is the first in the eternal succession of the dawns that are coming, — Usha widens bringing out that which lives, awakening someone who was dead. . . . What is her scope when she harmonises with the dawns that shone out before and those that now must shine? She desires the ancient mornings and fulfils their light; projecting forwards her illumination she enters into communion with the rest that are to come.* Kutsa Angirasa — Rig Veda.<sup>1</sup>

*Threefold are those supreme births of this divine force that is in the world, they are true, they are desirable; he moves there wide-overt within the Infinite and shines pure, luminous and fulfilling. . . . That which is immortal in mortals and possessed of the truth, is a god and established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers. . . . Become high-uplifted, O Strength, pierce all veils, manifest in us the things of the Godhead.* Vamadeva — Rig Veda.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last, — God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.

These persistent ideals of the race are at once the contradiction of its normal experience and the affirmation of higher and deeper experiences which are abnormal to humanity and only to be attained, in their organised entirety, by a revolutionary individual effort or an evolutionary general progression. To know, possess and be the divine

<sup>1</sup>I. 113. 8, 10.

<sup>2</sup>IV. 1. 7; IV. 2. 1; IV. 4. 5.





being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation, — this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution. To the ordinary material intellect which takes its present organisation of consciousness for the limit of its possibilities, the direct contradiction of the unrealised ideals with the realised fact is a final argument against their validity. But if we take a more deliberate view of the world's workings, that direct opposition appears rather as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction.

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour. The accordance of active Life with a material of form in which the condition of activity itself seems to be inertia, is one problem of opposites that Nature has solved and seeks always to solve better with greater complexities; for its perfect solution would be the material immortality of a fully organised mind-supporting animal body. The accordance of conscious mind and conscious will with a form and a life in themselves not overtly



self-conscious and capable at best of a mechanical or subconscious will is another problem of opposites in which she has produced astonishing results and aims always at higher marvels; for there her ultimate miracle would be an animal consciousness no longer seeking but possessed of Truth and Light, with the practical omnipotence which would result from the possession of a direct and perfected knowledge. Not only, then, is the upward impulse of man towards the accordance of yet higher opposites rational in itself, but it is the only logical completion of a rule and an effort that seem to be a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings.

We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness



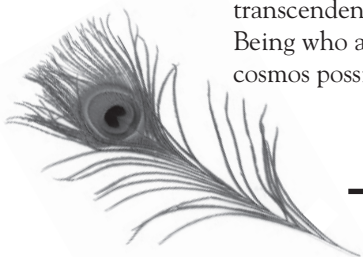


may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms of Life. As there, so here, the impulse exists more or less obscurely in her different vessels with an ever-ascending series in the power of its will-to-be; as there, so here, it is gradually evolving and bound fully to evolve the necessary organs and faculties. As the impulse towards Mind ranges from the more sensitive reactions of Life in the metal and the plant up to its full organisation in man, so in man himself there is the same ascending series, the preparation, if nothing more, of a higher and divine life. The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God? For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.

Thus the eternal paradox and eternal truth of a divine life in an animal body, an immortal aspiration or reality inhabiting a mortal tenement, a single and universal consciousness representing itself in limited minds and divided egos, a transcendent, indefinable, timeless and spaceless Being who alone renders time and space and cosmos possible, and in all these the higher truth

realisable by the lower term, justify themselves to the deliberate reason as well as to the persistent instinct or intuition of mankind. Attempts are sometimes made to have done finally with questionings which have so often been declared insoluble by logical thought and to persuade men to limit their mental activities to the practical and immediate problems of their material existence in the universe; but such evasions are never permanent in their effect. Mankind returns from them with a more vehement impulse of inquiry or a more violent hunger for an immediate solution. By that hunger mysticism profits and new religions arise to replace the old that have been destroyed or stripped of significance by a scepticism which itself could not satisfy because, although its business was inquiry, it was unwilling sufficiently to inquire. The attempt to deny or stifle a truth because it is yet obscure in its outward workings and too often represented by obscurantist superstition or a crude faith, is itself a kind of obscurantism. The will to escape from a cosmic necessity because it is arduous, difficult to justify by immediate tangible results, slow in regulating its operations, must turn out eventually to have been no acceptance of the truth of Nature but a revolt against the secret, mightier will of the great Mother. It is better and more rational to accept what she will not allow us as a race to reject and lift it from the sphere of blind instinct, obscure intuition and random aspiration into the light of reason and an instructed and consciously self-guiding will. And if there is any higher light of illumined intuition or self-revealing truth which is now in man either obstructed and inoperative or works with intermittent glancings as if from behind a veil or with occasional displays as of the northern lights in our material skies, then there also we need not fear to aspire. For it is likely that such is the next higher state of consciousness of which Mind is only a form and veil, and through the splendours of that light may lie the path of our progressive self-enlargement into whatever highest state is humanity's ultimate resting-place.

(The opening chapter of *The Life Divine*, CWSA, Vol. 21, pages 3-7. This article was first published on 15 August 1914 — a century ago.)





### **Liberation [1]**

*I have thrown from me the whirling dance of mind  
And stand now in the spirit's silence free;  
Timeless and deathless beyond creature kind,  
The centre of my own eternity.*

*I have escaped and the small self is dead;  
I am immortal, alone, ineffable;  
I have gone out from the universe I made,  
And have grown nameless and immeasurable.*

*My mind is hushed in wide and endless light,  
My heart a solitude of delight and peace,  
My sense unsnared by touch and sound and sight,  
My body a point in white infinities.*

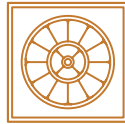
*I am the one Being's sole immobile Bliss:  
No one I am, I who am all that is.*

*Richard*





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*Our heart is purified from  
trouble and anguish; it  
is firm and calm, and  
sees the Divine in everything.*

*With my blessings*

A handwritten signature in red ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial letter followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

